



[Abraham Maslow](#) (1954) attempted to synthesize a large body of research related to [human motivation](#). Prior to [Maslow](#), researchers generally focused separately on such factors as biology, achievement, or power to explain what energizes, directs, and sustains human behavior. Maslow posited a [hierarchy of human needs](#) based on two groupings: deficiency needs and growth needs. Within the deficiency needs, each lower need must be met before moving to the next higher level. Once each of these needs has been satisfied, if at some future time a deficiency is detected, the individual will act to remove the deficiency. The first four levels are:

- 1) Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.;
- 2) Safety/security: out of danger;
- 3) Belonginess and Love: affiliate with others, be accepted; and
- 4) Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.

According to Maslow, an individual is ready to act upon the growth needs if and only if the deficiency needs are met. Maslow's initial conceptualization included only one growth need--self-actualization. Self-actualized people are characterized by: 1) being problem-focused; 2) incorporating an ongoing freshness of appreciation of life; 3) a concern about personal growth; and 4) the ability to have peak experiences. Maslow later [differentiated the growth need of self-actualization](#), specifically naming two lower-level

growth needs prior to general level of self-actualization (Maslow & Lowery, 1998) and one beyond that level (Maslow, 1971). They are:

- 5) Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore;
- 6) Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty;
- 7) [Self-actualization](#): to find self-fulfillment and realize one's potential;
and
- 8) [Self-transcendence](#): to connect to something beyond the ego or to help others find self-fulfillment and realize their potential.

Maslow's basic position is that as one becomes more [self-actualized and self-transcendent](#), one becomes more wise (develops wisdom) and automatically knows what to do in a wide variety of situations. [Daniels](#) (2001) suggests that Maslow's ultimate conclusion that the highest levels of self-actualization are transcendent in their nature may be one of his most important contributions to the study of human behavior and motivation.